

**News Release***Communications New Brunswick***N.B. Human Rights Commission****Statement on World AIDS Day (04/12/03)**

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FREDERICTON (CNB) - Since 1988, Dec. 1 of each year has been marked as World AIDS Day, following a proclamation of the UN General Assembly declaring AIDS to be a global pandemic. Despite concerted efforts to contain the disease, AIDS remains one of the most serious public health problems of our time. About 33.4 million people in the world have the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) today.

"World AIDS Day is a day to remember those near to us that have succumbed to the disease and those struggling with it," said Alanna Palmer, chair of the New Brunswick Human Rights Commission.

"It is also a day to reflect upon the danger that AIDS poses to humanity and about the extent to which it continues to spread. In order to combat AIDS effectively, people must educate themselves and combat unfounded fears."

Recently, the Human Rights Commission was able to facilitate a settlement between a former tenant living with HIV and the landlord of the apartment where he was rooming. Both parties agreed that this process had underscored for them and others in their community the need for greater awareness and education around how debilitating a disease HIV/AIDS can be, and how often its victims face prejudice and discrimination due to fears about the disease.

Landlords, including those accepting boarders or roomers into their own homes, are subject to the Human Rights Act's non-discrimination provisions. "Evicting a tenant when you learn they have HIV is the sort of discrimination that the act serves to prevent," Palmer said. Further information is available on the commission website in its *General Criteria for the Investigation of Complaints of HIV/AIDS Discrimination*.

"The AIDS pandemic poses a threat that we must all work to prevent, but it also offers us a challenge and an opportunity to break down barriers of intolerance. It focuses us instead on our common needs and common humanity," Palmer said. "As New Brunswickers mark World AIDS Day this week, we should also think about what we can do to ensure that people with AIDS both here and elsewhere live in conditions where tolerance, fairness and the equal right to housing, employment and health care are guaranteed by law."

The guideline mentioned in the statement can be found online at: <http://www.gnb.ca/hrc-cdp/e/gaids.htm>.

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